



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

OCT 31 2012

Dear Mr. Nugent:

Thank you for your letter of September 13 concerning the events in Yemen and the security of our diplomatic missions throughout the region. We appreciate the concern that you and your colleagues have expressed in ensuring that our overseas staff remain safe. We share your commitment.

The Department of State maintains a robust diplomatic presence around the world, including in challenging security environments where vital American interests are at stake. As part of our effort to protect our personnel and missions, we regularly assess our security posture to reflect rapidly changing environments and the potential threats they may present. Our security systems are based on a systematic approach that uses host government resources, combined with defensive security programs and Chief of Mission security personnel, to respond in the event of an attack. Additionally, when needed, our posts may convene Emergency Action Committee (EAC) meetings – led by the Chief of Mission and including subject-matter experts – to review the security situation, provide guidance to the Chief of Mission on preparing for and responding to threats and other crises, and to take appropriate actions.

As a result of recent events in the Middle East and North Africa, the Department took immediate measures to increase security at our diplomatic posts in the region. We immediately requested an increase of host country police and military personnel outside of select U.S. facilities and added extra local guard forces to provide perimeter security and access control. For instance, in Yemen, the Yemeni government responded swiftly by increasing host country security assets at U.S. diplomatic facilities in Sana'a.

During extraordinary security circumstances, the Department of State may request additional resources from the Department of Defense. In response to the violence in Yemen, for example, the Department of Defense deployed a Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team – or FAST – to reinforce the physical security of

The Honorable
Richard Nugent,
House of Representatives.

diplomats and diplomatic facilities there. A Marine Rifle Platoon is currently stationed at our residential facility in Sana'a, and a permanent Marine Security Guard detachment tasked with providing internal security services to prevent the compromise of classified information is stationed at our embassy there. These additional security assets fall under the operational control of the Regional Security Officer (RSO), a Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent.

We continue to monitor the worldwide situation through communication with posts via the Washington-based Diplomatic Security Command Center (DSCC). Through the DSCC, we have been able to work with individual posts to adjust mission contingency plans and to ensure a coordinated effort to secure U.S. facilities and personnel.

The Chief of Mission – in consultation with the RSO – establishes the Mission's firearms policy that applies to all U.S. government-controlled security forces at the post. Included in the Chief of Mission firearms policy are rules on the use of force. These rules are in accordance with the State Department's deadly force and firearms policy, which states that an individual may use deadly force only when necessary, that is, when the individual has a reasonable belief that the subject of such force poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the individual or to another person.

In addition, Department of State and other U.S. Government personnel who serve in certain high-threat posts, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, and our Mexican border posts, receive intensive security training, known as Foreign Affairs Counter-Threat Training, to provide enhanced security and life safety skills. The training includes counter-threat driving skills, firearms familiarization, first aid, security awareness, hostage rescue, and an overview of the Department's deadly force and firearms policy.

We fully understand that operating overseas presents unique challenges and that there is never a complete guarantee of safety. Department of State personnel serving abroad are aware of this risk. We do everything we can to reduce risk, but we cannot eliminate it. In the face of ever-evolving threats, the Department strives to provide the most secure environment possible for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. S. Adams', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David S. Adams
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs